January 14, 2019

Dear Leaders Pelosi and McCarthy and Chairman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger,

Collectively, Hurricanes Florence and Michael caused over a hundred fatalities and tens of billions of dollars in damages. The National Audubon Society has staff and members that are part of the communities impacted by these catastrophic hurricanes and we remain thankful for Congress’ support for these ongoing recovery efforts.

On behalf of our more than one million members, including over 68,300 in Florida, 31,300 in North Carolina, and 15,700 in South Carolina, the National Audubon Society stands in strong support of H.R. 268, which would make supplemental appropriations available to help recover from Hurricanes Florence and Michael and other natural disasters.

Resilient, healthy coastal ecosystems serve as the first line of defense for coastal communities facing stronger, more frequent storms and sea level rise. In addition, natural floodplains and healthy forests are essential for water quality and quantity protections. Audubon strongly supports this bill, which provides funding to programs that protect and restore natural infrastructure that would cost-effectively reduce future storm and flooding risk. These programs include:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture/Emergency Forest Restoration Program. This program provides assistance to private forest owners for restoration.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture/Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations. This program facilitates the construction of small watershed improvements, including fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, stream channel restoration, and water quality improvements.
• National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Title IX Fund Grants. This program provides competitive grants to enhance coastal resilience through restoration of natural infrastructure, such as barrier islands, oyster reefs, and wetlands.

• U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Investigations and Construction. This funding would study and accelerate construction of projects to reduce risk from future floods and hurricanes.

• U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Construction. This funding would restore and rebuild infrastructure at National Wildlife Refuges and provide competitive grants to increase the resiliency and capacity of coastal habitat and infrastructure to withstand impacts from future storms.

• U.S. Geological Survey/Surveys, Investigations, and Research. This funding would repair and replace equipment and facilities damaged by disasters and collect data in areas affected by Hurricanes Florence and Michael.

• U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development/CDBG DR. This program helps communities rebuild infrastructure affected by natural disasters. By designating some CDBG DR funds for mitigation the future risks of storms and flooding can be decreased. Mitigation actions should be considered at a community scale or larger and include investments in natural infrastructure to maximize risk reduction.

When the House of Representatives votes on the critical legislation, please let us know if you have any questions and we urge you to support H.R. 268.

Sincerely,

Karen Hyun, Ph.D.
Vice President, Coastal Conservation
National Audubon Society

CC Florida Delegation
Representative Matt Gaetz
Representative Neal Dunn
Representative Ted Yoho
Representative John Rutherford
Representative Alfred Lawson Jr.
Representative Michael Waltz
Representative Stephanie Murphy
Representative Bill Posey
Representative Darren Soto
Representative Val Demings
Representative Dan Webster
Representative Gus Bilirakis
Representative Charlie Crist
Representative Kathy Castor
Representative Ross Spano
Representative Vern Buchanan
Representative Greg Steube
Representative Brian Mast
Representative Francis Rooney
Representative Alcee Hastings
Representative Lois Frankel
Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Representative Frederica Wilson
Representative Mario Diaz-Balart
Representative Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Representative Donna Shalala

North Carolina Delegation
Representative G.K. Butterfield
Representative George Holding
Representative Walter Jones
Representative David Price
Representative Virginia Foxx
Representative Mark Walker
Representative David Rouzer
Representative Richard Hudson
Representative Patrick McHenry
Representative Mark Meadows
Representative Alma Adams
Representative Ted Budd

South Carolina Delegation
Representative Joe Wilson
Representative Jeff Duncan
Representative William Timmons
Representative Ralph Norman
Representative Jim Clyburn
Representative Tom Rice